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silicate binder having a $\text{SiO}_2/\text{M}_2\text{O}$ mole ratio, where M represents total alkali metal and ammonium ions, of at least 6:1.

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14. (Amended) A method of using a silicate or alkoxysilane solution as a spray treatment of steel primer coated with a primer coating comprising an aqueous silica sol or alkali metal silicate binder having a $\text{SiO}_2/\text{M}_2\text{O}$ mole ratio, where M represents total alkali metal and ammonium ions, of at least 6:1.

REMARKS

Claims 1 through 14 have been amended. The amendments requested in this Preliminary Amendment are not narrowing amendments and/or are made for reasons of form and/or for other purposes other than for reasons of patentability.

Attached to this Preliminary Amendment is a marked-up version of the changes made to the specification and claims by the current amendment. The attached page is captioned "**Version with markings to show changes made.**"

Early consideration and allowance of the claims are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE**In the Specification**

At page 1, line 3, the following has been inserted:

This application is the national phase of International Patent Application No. PCT/EP00/02547, filed on March 17, 2000, and which claims priority of European Patent Application No. 99302127.8, filed March 18, 1999.

At page 1, line 4, the following has been inserted:

Background of the Invention

At page 3, line 30, the following has been inserted:

Summary of the Invention

At page 4, line 8, the following has been inserted:

Detailed Description of the Invention**In the Claims**

Claims 1 through 14 have been amended as follows:

1. (Amended) A process for primer coating of steel which is intended to be fabricated and overcoated, in which process the steel is primer coated with a primer coating comprising a silica or silicate binder, wherein [characterized in that] the binder comprises an aqueous silica sol or alkali metal silicate having a $\text{SiO}_2/\text{M}_2\text{O}$ mole ratio, where M represents total alkali metal and ammonium

ions, of at least 6:1, and that after the primer coating has dried to the extent that it is touch dry it is treated with a film strengthening solution.

2. (Amended) A process according to claim 1[, characterized in that] wherein the touch dry primer coating is sprayed with the film strengthening solution.
3. (Amended) A process according to claim 1 [or claim 2, characterized in that] wherein the binder is a silica sol of $\text{SiO}_2/\text{M}_2\text{O}$ mole ratio at least 25:1.
4. (Amended) A process according to claim 1 [or claim 2, characterized in that] wherein the binder comprises an aqueous solution of an alkali metal or ammonium silicate stabilized by a siliconate substituted by at least one anionic group of lower pKa than silicic acid, having a pH of 7 to 10.5 prepared by lowering the pH of a solution of silicate and siliconate by ion exchange.
5. (Amended) A process according to claim 1 wherein [any of claims 1 to 4, characterized in that] the primer coating further comprises zinc powder and/or a zinc alloy.
6. (Amended) A process according to claim 1 wherein [any of claims 1 to 5, characterized in that] the primer coating further comprises an organic resin.
7. (Amended) A process according to claim 1 wherein [any of claims 1 to 6, characterized in that] all components of the coating composition are added and thoroughly mixed shortly before application.
8. (Amended) A process according to claim 1 wherein [any of claims 1 to 7, characterized in that] the touch dry primer coating is treated with a solution of a silicate or alkoxysilane.

9. (Amended) A process according to claim 1 wherein [any of claims 1 to 8, characterized in that] the solution is applied to the touch dry primer coated steel at 0.005-0.2 liters per square meter primer coated surface.
10. (Amended) A process according to claim 1 wherein [any of claims 1 to 9, characterized in that] the touch dry primer coating is treated with an aqueous solution of an inorganic salt of concentration at least 0.01M.
11. (Amended) A process according to claim 1 wherein [any of claims 1 to 10, characterized in that] the primer coating of the steel, drying of the primer coating until it is touch dry and application of the treatment solution are carried out successively in an on-line process.
12. (Amended) A process according to claim 1 wherein [any of claims 1 to 11, characterized in that] the primer coating is dried at a temperature of 10 - 60°C in a forced air flow.
13. (Amended) [Use of] A method of using an aqueous solution of an inorganic salt of concentration at least 0.01M as a spray treatment of steel primer coated with a primer coating comprising an aqueous silica sol or alkali metal silicate binder having a $\text{SiO}_2/\text{M}_2\text{O}$ mole ratio, where M represents total alkali metal and ammonium ions, of at least 6:1.
14. (Amended) [Use of] A method of using a silicate or alkoxysilane solution as a spray treatment of steel primer coated with a primer coating comprising an aqueous silica sol or alkali metal silicate binder having a $\text{SiO}_2/\text{M}_2\text{O}$ mole ratio, where M represents total alkali metal and ammonium ions, of at least 6:1.